

# Abraham Lincoln

When Abraham Lincoln was nineteen years old, he visited the city of New Orleans. He saw things he would never forget. He saw black people being sold in slave markets. They were chained together and treated like animals. Lincoln watched little children being sold to strangers and taken away from their parents. Lincoln was heartbroken and these memories stayed with him for the rest of his life. Although slavery was allowed in many states of the Union, Lincoln believed that it was wrong and he was not afraid to say so.

In 1858, Lincoln ran for the United States Senate against Stephen Douglas. There was much talk about slavery. Should the owning of slaves be allowed in new states that were just coming into the Union? Douglas said that the decision to own slaves was up to each individual person. Lincoln said that slavery must not be allowed to spread because it was wrong. But he knew that it would not be easy to end slavery in those states that had allowed it for so many years. Lincoln believed it was important to keep the United States strong. He felt that slavery weakened the country. In one speech, he said the country could not last half slave and half free. He said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Lincoln lost the election to the Senate, but he became well known for his views. In 1860 he ran for president of the United States.

The slave states opposed Lincoln as president. They did not want to abolish slavery. They threatened to leave the Union if Lincoln was elected. When he became president, the slave states carried out their threat. A terrible war broke out between the northern and southern states. At times, members of the same family were fighting against one another.

In 1863, Lincoln gave an order called the Emancipation Proclamation, which ended slavery. The war finally ended two years later. The southern states once more became part of the Union, but slavery was no longer allowed. No more would little children be torn from their parents and sold to strangers. Abraham Lincoln had achieved his goal.